

September 2, 2008

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Reading is a skill of great importance in all academic areas and in many aspects of everyday life. As such, it is essential that students make reading a part of their daily routine.

Reading entertains, explains, inspires and comforts. Reading provides us with meaning in our lives, and unless our children are able to analyze, question and respond to what they read, they will not become scientists or poets, or know the joy of being transported to another world through a book. Children not only learn to read by reading, but they also learn how to spell and write by reading. Children need practice to be better pianists and hockey players, and they need to practise reading to become better readers.

This letter is being sent to you to offer some practical ways to help your child get the necessary practice to be a better reader. By grade eight, most of the students are able to decode words well, but outside pressures cause them to experience a slump in their enjoyment of reading. Friends, hobbies, lessons, sports, computer games and television all compete for your child's time. At school, we are working to spark the students' interest in reading, and to improve their skills, but need your help at home as well. You are a partner in your child's development.

The following are some ways to help keep your child from falling into a reading slump:

- Model good reading behaviour by letting your child see you reading frequently, both for pleasure and information.
- Set aside a family reading time. Even two days a week will make a difference.
- Review your child's schedule together. Be sure that there is time given to independent reading, even if it means unplugging the TV, stereo and phone.
- If you have stopped going to the library, start going again. Find out what authors interest your child, or what current authors are popular.
- Sign out books on tape or CD from the library. Play them on long or even short car trips.
- Give your child books as gifts. Visit a bookstore together, and if you can afford it, treat them to a book. If your child watches a movie that he/she enjoys, buy them the book.
- Read what your child is reading and discuss the characters or the story together, encouraging him/her to express opinions and feelings, and give reasons for those.
- Offer to subscribe to a current magazine. It is important that your child also read non-fiction material. Most of the reading that we do after we leave school is information text.
- While reading aloud with your child, stop reading and do some predicting about what will happen next, or what the ending will be.
- Ask your child to read to a younger sibling or neighbour.
- Stay involved with your child's homework. Ask about assignments and projects. This tells your child that you are interested in his/her life.
- If you have let reading-together sessions drop, begin them again. Choose a book beyond your child's reading abilities and read it aloud to him/her each night.

Studies have shown that reading aloud to children of all ages is very important. Some of the benefits for teens are:

- learning about words and language
- building listening skills
- expanding vocabulary
- gaining knowledge about a variety of topics
- exploring social and moral issues and behaviours in a comfortable environment
- being motivated to read on their own
- discovering which authors and writing styles they like
- staying connected to their families
- establishing a lifelong commitment to reading.

INDEPENDENT READING PROGRAM INFORMATION MOUNT EVEREST READING CHALLENGE

In order to motivate students to read independently, the Grade 8 Language Arts classes will be participating in a reading challenge. Our goal is to reach the summit of Mount Everest, a distance of 8, 848 metres.

Details of the Challenge:

- independent reading at home and at school with class time provided each day
(30 minutes each night is expected as part of daily homework)
- number of pages read to be updated weekly during reading conferences between the student and teacher
- reading log (in language duotang) to be filled in for reading done at school and at home and signed weekly by parent/ guardian
- books to be recorded in a class database on the computer upon completion
- each student must reach the summit independently by reading at least 2 books each month that are at least 150 pages in length (2 books x 9 months = 18 books)
- each book read = a climb of 500 metres
- students will receive a sticker on their Mount Everest chart each time they climb 500 metres (parent signature required upon completion of each book)

Books read aloud at home may also be included. The reward will be a Gr. 8 celebration with music and nutritious snacks for those students who reach the summit.

Thank you for your continued support of our reading programs. Please sign below to acknowledge receipt of this information.

Tina Giannopoulos and Dale Mieske

Parent Signature: _____ **Date:** _____